2004 –2005

Saskatchewan
Provincial Budget

Performance Plan

Minister's Message

Agriculture is a prominent component of the provincial economy and the foundation for much of the economic activity that occurs in rural Saskatchewan. The Saskatchewan Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization (SAFRR) Performance Plan for 2004-05 and beyond builds on this essential fact and has been shaped by an ongoing dialogue with numerous stakeholders on the future of this vital industry. I am committed to completing the key actions identified in this plan and reporting on the Department's actual progress to the people of Saskatchewan, in July 2005.

The 2004-05 Plan continues the development agenda of SAFRR while being part of the Government effort to address current fiscal conditions. The plan also addresses goals related to environmental sustainability and to providing safe food.

In less than a year, Saskatchewan will celebrate its Centennial as a Province of Canada. That status was bestowed in recognition of the tremendous expansion of population and economic activity that was to occur as our agricultural land base was settled and developed. Our Centennial gives us an opportunity to both look back on the accomplishments and rich history of this industry and to focus on its future.

The Saskatchewan agricultural sector – including the value-added sector – continues to represent a significant opportunity, even though it currently faces a number of immediate challenges. My Department has worked hard and effectively in addressing unforeseen events such as Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE) in 2003-04. We will continue to work with stakeholders to meet the challenges and realize the opportunities in the coming year and years hence.

Mark Wartman
Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization

Who We Are

The mandate of Saskatchewan Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization (SAFRR) is to foster a commercially viable, self-sufficient, and sustainable agriculture and food sector, and healthy and diverse rural communities. Working with individuals, businesses, communities, and governments, SAFRR assists farmers and ranchers, encourages higher value production and processing, and promotes sustainable economic and social development in rural Saskatchewan.

Through these efforts, the Department seeks to achieve its vision of, "A thriving agricultural sector and dynamic rural communities that contribute to an enhanced quality of life for all Saskatchewan residents."

In pursuit of this vision and to deliver on its mandate, SAFRR provides programs, technical support and specialist services to encourage the expansion of the livestock sector, the diversification to higher value crops and additional processing of agricultural production. The delivery of these services is supported by an evolving regional delivery model focusing on three interlocking functions dealing with building community capacity, supporting agri-businesses and developing technical capacity for competitive food value chains. The Department is responsible for the administration of eight million acres of Crown land that is leased to farmers and ranchers or operated as community pastures. Through its Rural Issues Office, SAFRR is charged with facilitating the implementation of the Rural Strategy. The Department provides significant third party funding for research and development to maintain and enhance the competitive position of the industry. SAFRR has an oversight role to ensure livestock projects are developed in an environmentally sustainable manner, that disease surveillance occurs and that farm quality assurance programs are developed to ensure the production of safe food.

The Department is experienced in rapidly developing and delivering short-term assistance programs to deal with extraordinary shocks to the provincial farm economy. SAFRR also funds ongoing risk management programs to assist producers in offsetting risks in crop production, to stabilize income and to deal with economic disasters.

Saskatchewan is a participant in the Agricultural Policy Framework (APF) Agreement. This agreement provides for co-ordinated programming in the areas of business risk management, food safety and food quality, science and innovation, environment and renewal. In SAFRR's 2003-04 Performance Plan, the commitment was made to invest $1 billion over the next five years to implement the APF. The Department will undertake to deliver on the key components of its commitments during the life of the agreement, consistent with fiscal capacity.

SAFRR is keenly aware that provincial agricultural production and processing industries operate in a dynamic environment and that rural communities experience both diverse and occasionally unique challenges and opportunities. Our strategic planning must be cognizant of the current state of the industry and of rural Saskatchewan, and of longer-term trends and emerging opportunities. The process to attaining this understanding includes constant dialogue with producers and producer organizations, including the:

- Action Committee on the Rural Economy
- Pork Industry Advisory Board
- Livestock Loan Guarantee Program Producer Advisory Committee
- Commodity Development Boards/Commissions
- Agriculture Development Fund Board
- Farm Support Review Committee
- Minister's Advisory Committee on BSE
- Leaders of Provincial Farm Organizations, and
- Commodity Specific Producer and Agri-Business Organizations

Plan at a Glance

This is the third performance plan publicly released by Saskatchewan Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization. It continues many of the initiatives of previous plans, but has been modified to reflect reconsideration of departmental priorities and service delivery and to respond to the current fiscal conditions facing the Province. Future performance plans will continue to evolve over time as the strategic planning, performance management and public reporting processes mature and as stakeholder feedback is incorporated.

The goals and objectives identified in the following are multi-year in nature. Over time, the Department will work towards achieving its objectives, and through these will realize its broader long-term goals. For each objective, a number of key actions have been developed which apply to the 2004-05 fiscal year. A set of performance measures has been established to gauge our progress in achieving our objectives.

SAFRR will report on actual, compared to planned progress after year end, in the 2004-05 Annual Report.

Below is a summary of our plan for 2004-05 and beyond. The goals and objectives articulate the outcomes the Department is pursing which support advancement towards our vision. The performance measures are one of the key tools we will use to gauge our progress toward our objectives.

DEPARTMENT VISION

A thriving agricultural sector and dynamic rural communities that contribute to an enhanced quality of life for all Saskatchewan residents

GOAL #1

Prosperous, sustainable, agricultural production and processing industries

OBJECTIVE 1 - *Increased livestock production and diversification to higher value crops*

Performance Measures:

- Hogs marketed
- Slaughter steers/heifers marketed
- Beef cow herd size
- Value of Saskatchewan crop output per acre

OBJECTIVE 2 - *Increased total value of goods and services produced by the agriculture and food sector*

Performance Measure:

- Primary agriculture Gross Domestic Product (GDP) plus agri-value (food, beverage, feed processing) GDP

OBJECTIVE 3 - *Enhanced environmental stewardship*

Performance Measures:

- Conservation till acreage as a per cent of land prepared for seeding
- Summerfallow as a per cent of total cultivated land
- Number of environmental farm planning workshops that are resourced

OBJECTIVE 4 - *Improved food safety and quality systems*

Performance Measures:

- Number of incidences where inhibitor penalties are applied to dairy producers
- Number of hogs that are inspected in federally regulated slaughter facilities in Saskatchewan

OBJECTIVE 5 - *Effective safety net and risk management tools*

Performance Measures:

- Acreage insured under crop insurance as a percentage of total acreage seeded annually to crops or devoted to perennial tame hay and native forage
- Percentage of Saskatchewan farm operations above $10,000 (as estimated by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada through the annual Farm Financial Survey) that participate in the 2004 Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization (CAIS) program

GOAL #2

Strong, resourceful, rural people, families and communities

OBJECTIVE 1 - *Rural people and families with better tools and resources to plan for their future*

Performance Measures:

- Number of inquires to SAFRR for agronomic information

OBJECTIVE 2 - *Effective partnerships focused on revitalizing the rural economy*

Performance Measures:

- Under development

104-05152/

2004-05 Financial Overview

2004-05 ESTIMATES	*(in thousands of dollars)*
Administration	$ 2,053
Accommodation and Central Services	3,895
Industry Assistance	3,142
Land Management	3,638
Policy and Planning	6,028
Research and Technology	13,608
Development and	
Technology Transfer	11,283
Farm Stability and Adaptation	101,526
Financial Programs	4,744
Crop Insurance	111,524
Inspection and	
Regulatory Management	3,368
Total Appropriation	$ 264,809
Capital Acquisitions	(570)
Amortization	110
Total Expense	$ 264,349

APPROPRIATION BY TYPE	*(in thousands of dollars)*
Capital	$ 570
Personal Services	21,946
Supplier and Other Payments	13,188
Transfers and Public Services	41,055
Transfers to Individuals	188,050
Total Appropriation	$ 264,809*
Full-time Equivalents	
(Staff Complement)	529.4

* *Including grants to third parties totaling $16.7 million. (6.3 per cent of total budget)*

Trends and Issues

Saskatchewan's agriculture industry continues to evolve. The Province's farmers and entrepreneurs are adept at capitalizing on opportunity in spite of successive challenges within the industry. Many of these – drought, pests, and price fluctuations, are familiar. Other challenges are relatively new, resulting from our position in the global economy.

The loss of the Crow Benefit, the long-term trend towards lower cereal grain prices and the economic impact of increased farm size (fewer farm families and declining rural population) have created a compelling case for the development of a different agricultural sector in Saskatchewan. Greater emphasis on livestock would increase the value of total primary production and provide opportunities for more slaughter and secondary manufacturing activity. Most livestock processing occurs near the primary production, whereas most grain processing occurs close to the final consumer.

TRENDS

HOG MARKETINGS

Saskatchewan hog marketings have doubled since 1997, indicating the Province's natural advantages of space, climate, feed supply and cost are being realized. These advantages will position the sector for further growth despite the current difficulties being experienced in the global hog sector.

BEEF COW HERD GROWTH

A focused effort to grow the provincial beef cow herd is succeeding. As with hogs, the Province's natural advantages and proximity to North American markets bode well for continued sector growth. BSE impact aside, Saskatchewan remains an economically viable place to expand beef production.

PRODUCTION OF SPECIAL CROPS

Saskatchewan grain producers have diversified their production to include special crops in response to depressed wheat and feed grain prices caused by international subsides. In a normal year, the Province accounts for approximately 25 per cent of world mustard production; 18 per cent of lentil production; 13 per cent of dry pea production and six per cent of world chickpea production.

EXPANSION IN ORGANIC FARMING

Organic farming is an important niche opportunity. Farmers are utilizing a climate that is conducive to organic production and are capitalizing on this market. In 2001 there were 1,138 certified organic producers in Saskatchewan, compared to 626 in 1999.

THE GROWTH IN FOOD AND BEVERAGE MANUFACTURING

Additional value in agriculture is captured when raw materials are transformed into higher priced products. Value-added growth has been constant as Saskatchewan has proven to be a good place to process some of our primary commodities. Food and beverage industry shipments reached $1.92 billion in calendar 2002, compared to $1.87 billion a year earlier.

In response to and in support of these trends, SAFRR has implemented strategies to attract new people and investment into the livestock industry. Potential development opportunities and infrastructure requirements are being identified and project and technical assistance is available to a range of new or expanding agricultural enterprises.

ISSUES

REALIZED NET FARM INCOME

Over the last 25 years, Saskatchewan Realized Net Farm Income (RNFI) has generally trended downward. This reflects continuing and ever-changing pressures on the grain industry, both locally and internationally. In early February 2004, the federal government forecast Saskatchewan's 2003 RNFI at negative $465 million, the worst in recent history. This reflects the severity of the 2002 drought, reduced grain prices and the impact of BSE on livestock markets.

EXCHANGE RATES

Many Saskatchewan farmers are coping with a 20 per cent decline in commodity prices compared to a year earlier, due to the dramatic increase in the value of the Canadian dollar relative to the U.S. dollar. Although there may be some mitigating effect to the extent that inputs are priced in U.S. dollars, this kind of currency fluctuation creates an extremely difficult transition period as the industry adjusts.

CROP COMMODITY PRICES

Canadian prices are down significantly and mirror the difficult price environment of the previous five years. The decline, which is carrying over from 2003, can be attributed to appreciation in the Canadian dollar and price depressing international agricultural subsidies which cause overproduction.

HOG INDUSTRY PRESSURES

Producers expect fluctuations in profitability within the typical hog cycle, but the indirect effect of BSE and currency appreciation have placed abnormal pressures on the industry. Weak hog prices stem from U.S. packing plants operating near capacity in slaughtering Canadian and U.S. animals, and lower Canadian pork consumption, as consumers eat more beef in support of this BSE-impacted sector. In four of the previous eight years (1996-2003), the hog sector has realized returns below break-even levels. Both 2002 and 2003 have been unprofitable years.

A CATTLE SECTOR IMPACTED BY BSE

BSE was the dominant issue affecting this sector in 2003 and the impact continues into 2004. A positive Canadian consumer response and a partial reopening of the U.S. market have lessened the impact on slaughter steer and heifer prices. As of the second week of March, A1 steers prices were about 20 per cent lower than they were a year ago, a large part of which can be attributed to the higher exchange rate. Feeder prices also have been strengthening, reflecting the expectation that the U.S. market will open to Canadian live animals under age 30 months in 2004.

Little recovery is evident in the cull cow market. Canada lacks the slaughter capacity to handle these animals and export markets will likely remain closed. As a result, farmers continue to face a significant decrease in revenue from this portion of their operations.

INTERNATIONAL TRADE RULES

Domestic and export subsidies in the European Union and the U.S. have a large influence on Saskatchewan commodity prices. Two aspects of the 2002 U.S. Farm Bill are particularly troubling. The legislation supports pulse production and provides for mandatory Country of Origin Labeling (COL) on meat products which, if implemented, will disadvantage Canadian and foreign beef in the U.S. marketplace.

U.S. protectionist sentiments also have led to the imposition of duties on Canadian wheat imports, and ongoing challenges to the Canadian Wheat Board. The development of more effective rules that will govern international trade is dependent on the successful outcome in negotiations through the World Trade Organization.

SAFRR's response to these issues include ad hoc industry assistance, discussions and negotiations with the federal government on future risk management programming, as well as representations on trade issues and the economic injury being experienced.

Changes from 2003-04 Performance Plan

The goals and objectives identified in SAFRR's 2004-05 Strategic Plan are unchanged from those published last year. As part of ongoing efforts to measure performance, SAFRR has developed four new measures for 2004-05 as follows:

- Number of environmental farm planning workshops that are resourced
- Number of incidences where inhibitor penalties are applied to dairy producers
- Number of hogs that are inspected in federally regulated slaughter facilities in Saskatchewan
- Percentage of Saskatchewan farm operations above $10,000 (as estimated by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada through the annual Farm Financial Survey) that participate in the 2004 CAIS program

In addition, SAFRR is in the process of developing additional performance measures for the following objectives:

- Increased total value of goods and services produced by the agriculture and food sector
- Improved food safety and quality systems
- Effective partnerships focused on revitalizing the rural economy

Finally, SAFRR has dropped one performance measure in respect to the objective: "Rural people and families with better tools and resources to plan for the future". The performance measure, "Number of Farm Family Opportunity Initiative clients" is no longer relevant, as this part of the program has been discontinued.

Goals, Objectives, Actions and Measures

This section provides the detailed 2004-05 Performance Plan for SAFRR which supports advancement towards our vision of a thriving agricultural sector and dynamic rural communities that contribute to an enhanced quality of life for all Saskatchewan residents. Under each goal, a number of objectives have been established that support progress toward the broader goal statement. For each objective, a set of key actions that will be completed in 2004-05 has been identified. They are the means for making progress on the objectives. A set of performance measures has been established for each objective to gauge progress.

GOAL #1

Prosperous, sustainable, agricultural production and processing industries

OBJECTIVE 1 - *Increased livestock production and diversification to higher value crops*

One of the best opportunities to create jobs and economic growth in Saskatchewan is through further development of the livestock industry, particularly the cattle and hog sectors. Increases in such livestock production have the potential to encourage expansion in our domestic meat processing sector. An increase in the value of production per acre of crop land will also result in a larger rural economy and more employment in rural Saskatchewan. This may be achieved through higher yields, more intensive use of land and the growing of higher value crops.

Key Actions for 2004-05

- Proactively identify potential development opportunities and infrastructure requirements, and provide project support for new or expanding agricultural enterprises.
- Implement strategies to attract new people and investment to the livestock industry.
- Provide livestock and crop development information and services.
- Provide crop disease and pest surveillance.
- Provide irrigation development and information services.
- Manage agricultural Crown land and develop options for best use of asset.

What are we measuring?	Where are we starting from?
Hogs marketed	1.94 million *[2002; latest data available]*

A sustained increase in hogs marketed will indicate expansion in the industry. This measurement is an appropriate (but not an exact) indicator that the public policy necessary for expansion has been adopted, supporting infrastructure has been put into place, and required investment has actually occurred.

Although the Department is able to influence several production factors, certain key factors, including changes in market access, commodity prices, feed prices and availability, and interest rates are beyond the Department's control.

What are we measuring?	Where are we starting from?
Slaughter steers/heifers marketed	180,050 head *[2002; latest data available]*

A sustained increase in slaughter steers/heifers marketed will indicate expansion in the cattle feeding industry. The appropriateness of this measure and the Department's level of control or influence are similar to that noted above for hogs.

What are we measuring?	Where are we starting from?
Beef cow herd size	1.35 million head *[July 1, 2003]*

A sustained increase in the beef cow herd will require shifts in land use (most likely from crops) to grazing and forage production and will indicate that the cattle industry is expanding. The appropriateness of this measure and the Department's level of control or influence are similar to that noted above.

What are we measuring?	Where are we starting from?
Value of Saskatchewan crop output per acre	$55.70 per acre *[2003 preliminary]*

The monitoring of changes in the dollar value generated per acre of crop produced will allow the Department to gauge the level of adoption of new production technology and higher value crops.

While SAFRR can influence the value generated per acre, other factors, including weather conditions, the mix of commodities produced, trade and production distorting subsidies and commodity price fluctuations also have major impact.

OBJECTIVE 2 *- Increased total value of goods and services produced by the agriculture and food sector*

Development of the primary agricultural sector and further processing of this primary production is necessary to expand the contribution in economic output and employment that may be made to the provincial economy. Increased processing, particularly outside urban centers will directly enhance the rural economy and help keep smaller communities viable.

Key Actions for 2004-05

- Implement strategies to develop value chains for the beef, pork, flax, pulse and organic industries.
- Continue targeted investment attraction strategies such as the Agriculture Development Fund (ADF) Agri-Value Program to increase processing activity.
- Deliver the Agricultural New Generations Co-operatives (ANGen) Program to allow farmers to participate further up the value chain.
- Invest in and manage research and development to support the industry priority areas (noted above) and to create opportunities for the agriculture and food sector. Key components of this are SAFRR's Strategic Research Program Agreement with the University of Saskatchewan and project funding provided through ADF.
- Provide an effective regulatory environment for sector development.

What are we measuring?	Where are we starting from?
Primary agriculture GDP plus agri-value (food, beverage, feed processing) GDP	$1,972 million *[2002, latest data available]*

The primary plus agri-value Gross Domestic Product (GDP) measured by Statistics Canada indicates the contribution of agricultural primary and processing industries to the provincial GDP. The Department may influence the achievement of sustained increases in this measure through the adoption of appropriate policies and by working to ensure that the necessary supporting infrastructure is in place. Other factors which SAFRR can not control, include changes to the international trading environment and adverse movements in exchange rates and commodity prices.

What are we measuring?	Where are we starting from?
Under development	Under development

SAFRR is working to develop a measure of net new investment in the primary and agri-value sectors. Positive annual changes in the capital investment (for example, equipment, facilities, breeding animals) that is made in the primary and value-added agricultural sectors indicate that their wealth generating potential is being expanded.

OBJECTIVE 3 - *Enhanced environmental stewardship*

The agricultural sector recognizes that it has an important environmental stewardship role and that it must co-exist sustainably with the natural environment. There is general agreement across the industry that progressive farming and processing practices should be utilized in an environmentally sound manner to maintain our soil and water resources, preserve the atmosphere, and ensure compatibility between agriculture and biodiversity in the environment. This focus is essential to ensuring the industry's long-term vitality and profitability.

Key Actions for 2004-05

- Implement the environmental farm planning initiative.
- Provide environmental assessments for intensive livestock operations.
- Ensure that Saskatchewan farmers are treated fairly in the Climate Change Plan for Canada.
- Regulate the application of pesticide products by the agriculture industry.

What are we measuring?	Where are we starting from?
Conservation tillage as a per cent of land prepared for seeding	67.6% of acreage prepared for seeding *[2001, latest data available]*

Conservation till (which includes a variety of practices that reduce or minimize the disturbance of the topsoil) is the best management practice for long-term economic and environmentally sustainable crop production.

Climatic and economic factors may influence conservation till acreage in any one year. Adoption of this technology requires new capital investment, so that progress toward the objective should be measured over a multi-year period.

What are we measuring?	Where are we starting from?
Summerfallow as a per cent of total cultivated land	15.5% of total annual crop land acreage *[2003]*

Summer fallowing for weed control and increased moisture reserves may subject land to wind and water erosion and affect the organic content of the soil. These concerns plus advances in production technology are reducing this practice.

Moisture levels, weather conditions and economic factors may influence summerfallow acreage in any one year.

What are we measuring?	Where are we starting from?
Number of environmental farm planning workshops that are resourced	0 *[2003-04]*

The adoption of environmental farm planning by producers in Saskatchewan will need to be supported and facilitated by the Department. An effective delivery mechanism would be to provide producers with local workshops that are resourced by trained agrologists.

Department resources for third party delivery and producer interest will influence the number of workshops that may be offered and demanded.

***OBJECTIVE 4** - Improved food safety and quality systems*

Consumers throughout the world increasingly demand high safety standards in food production. Saskatchewan producers and processors must respond to that demand to compete in the global marketplace. In recognition of this, food safety and quality programming is one of the five elements of the APF. Measures are being developed and will be implemented to enhance the sector's ability to identify and respond to food safety issues and concerns, while improving market access and opportunities.

Key Actions for 2004-05

- Implement a food safety strategy for Saskatchewan's food processing sector.
- Assist industry in implementing on-farm food safety programs. This includes training, quality and safety programming initiatives at both the on-farm and processing level, surveillance of diseases of food animals as well as potential contamination points within the food system, and support for activities to determine food product quality parameters.

What are we measuring?	**Where are we starting from?**
Number of incidences where inhibitor (antibiotic residue) penalties are applied to dairy producers	19 incidents *[2002; latest data available]*

Consumers view milk as an essential foodstuff and place high importance on the safety and quality of milk produced and supplied to them.

SAFRR expects to have significant influence over the future number of penalties through education programs it is providing to producers and through anticipated revisions to the penalty regulations.

What are we measuring?	**Where are we starting from?**
Number of hogs that are inspected in federally regulated slaughter facilities in Saskatchewan	1,133,882 hogs *[2002; latest data available]*

There is greater market access for products of animals that are federally inspected. Products with this certification may be exported beyond provincial boundaries to other domestic and to international markets.

SAFRR anticipates it will have significant influence over the expansion in hogs that are federally inspected through an anticipated meat processor upgrading program and changes in meat regulations.

What are we measuring?

Under development

Where are we starting from?

Under development – data availability is being pursued with producer organizations

SAFRR is working to develop a measure of the number of farmers that have trained in On-Farm Food Safety Programs (OFFS). Ensuring a safe and high quality food supply requires the adoption of effective systems throughout the food chain, starting with the producer of the primary product.

SAFRR will have some influence over the number of farmers that take OFFS training through its efforts with provincial commodity groups to develop and implement appropriate programming. Producer participation will be dependent on their perception of the need, benefit and costs of such on-farm systems.

OBJECTIVE 5 *- Effective safety net programs and risk management tools*

Income from agricultural production is subject to both price and production risk and may be quite variable from year to year. Effective safety net programs and risk management tools are essential if producers are to deal with these risks and achieve the full economic potential of the sector. The development of new business risk management programming, including the CAIS program which replaces previous programming and provides producers with disaster assistance and income stabilization, has been an essential component of the APF.

Key Actions for 2004-05

- Implement the new federal-provincial business risk management programming (CAIS program).
- Provide crop insurance programs which grains and livestock producers may use to offset production failures and other natural hazards.
- Continue monitoring and delivery of programming to address unique risk situations (e.g., Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy).

What are we measuring?

Acreage insured under crop insurance as a percentage of total acreage seeded annually to crops or devoted to perennial tame hay and native forage

Where are we starting from?

75% of area seeded to annual crops
[2003]
25% of area in perennial tame hay and native forage
[2003]

One measure of the effectiveness of crop insurance programming is producer participation. This is calculated in terms of the actual acreage that is insured compared to the total possible acreage that could be insured. Although producer participation may be useful in gauging the effectiveness of crop insurance programming, other factors have an impact on participation. These include producers' perceptions of current and future growing conditions as well as individual assessments of risks and insurance needs.

What are we measuring?

Percentage of Saskatchewan farm operations above $10,000 (as estimated through the annual Farm Financial Survey) that participate in the 2004 CAIS Program

Where are we starting from?

0%
[2004 is the first year of the new CAIS Program]

One measure of the effectiveness of risk management is producer participation. SAFRR has some influence over producer participation through provision of information, promotion and communications on the program.

GOAL #2

Strong, resourceful rural people, families and communities

OBJECTIVE 1 *- Rural people and families with better tools and resources to plan for their future*

Saskatchewan's people are our most important resource in the development of the agriculture and food industry. Tools they need to make decisions regarding their individual operations to achieve that development need to be available – whether they are considering diversification and/or expansion of their operations, or exploring off-farm opportunities.

Key Actions for 2004-05

- Provide support and path-finding services to farm families contemplating changes in their operations.
- Provide specialist and technical expertise.
- Ensure farmers (who are either working their way out of financial stress or are expanding their enterprises to capture new opportunities) have access to financial advice and assistance in developing business plans.
- Provide information and counseling services to help farm families deal with the stresses in their industry.

What are we measuring?	**Where are we starting from?**
Number of inquiries to SAFRR for agronomic information	153,800 *[2002-03; latest data available]*

Changes in the number of inquiries on primary production and farm management subjects will enable the Department to gauge the popularity and usefulness of the technical and support services made available. The number of inquiries tends to rise if the sector is stressed by unusual weather, agronomic or economic factors.

OBJECTIVE 2 - *Effective partnerships focused on revitalizing the rural economy*

The revitalization of the rural economy necessitates an effective combination of economic policy, public investment, and attention to the health, social and economic well-being of rural residents. The achievement of these will require effective partnerships between and within rural communities, industry and government.

In pursuit of the realization of this objective, the Government of Saskatchewan established the Action Committee on the Rural Economy (ACRE) in 2002. ACRE has been quite effective in working with stakeholder groups to identify opportunities for government action to strengthen the rural economy. Further information on ACRE may be found at http://www.agr.gov.sk.ca/acre/default.asp.

Key Actions for 2004-05

- Continue implementation of initiatives identified in the Rural Strategy.
- Continue to implement interdepartmental mechanisms (rural issues check list and internal policy processes) to evaluate potential rural impacts of government policy. This evaluation process is referred to as the "rural lens".
- Facilitate and co-ordinate efforts by the Action Committee on the Rural Economy to promote dialogue and to identify new opportunities for rural development.
- Continue working relationships with stakeholders to create additional opportunities in rural Saskatchewan.

What are we measuring?

Under development

Where are we starting from?

Under development

SAFRR is working to develop a measure of net new investment in the primary and agri-value sectors. Positive annual changes in the investment made in the primary and value-added agricultural sectors located in rural Saskatchewan indicate that this area's wealth generating potential is being expanded.

Where to Obtain Additional Information

Readers seeking additional information may consult the SAFRR website, located at http://www.agr.gov.sk.ca/. This site includes detailed program information, agronomic information, reports, statistics and several interactive features. Additional information may also be obtained by writing:

Communications Branch
Room B5
3085 Albert Street
Regina, Saskatchewan
S4S 0B1

Readers may also provide feedback on SAFRR's plan via the above site, at http://www.agr.gov.sk.ca/apps/contact/ask_safrr.asp, or by writing to:

Deputy Minister
Saskatchewan Agriculture, Food and Rural Revitalization
Room 101, 3085 Albert Street
Regina, Saskatchewan
S4S 0B1